

A 5-part course exploring what it means to be a Light for Christ and how we might develop a personal Rule of Life.

Shining as Lights

Session 3

WALK in the Light



Study Group
80 mins



Individual
45-60 mins



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated

Lights for Christ

“O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling.”

”Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

— PSALM 43:3; 119:105



SHARE: what is your story?

Looking back to how we ended the last session: have you tried anything different since then in prayer, worship or Bible reading? If so, did that prove to be difficult, or nourishing, or even a bit of both?



If you are studying this course in a group. Share some of your experience with others.

Today's theme brings a sense of moving forward, making progress. Can you think of a particular experience you've had that involved walking, or some other form of travel? What did you enjoy about the journey? What did you find difficult? Again, you may like to think aloud about this with others.



HEAR: what does the Bible say?



Read 1 John 1:5-2:2; 3:11-18

1 John is an early letter or sermon, perhaps arising from the churches in Ephesus where the apostle John is believed to have ended his days. Its message is repetitive, with circling patterns, a bit like music; it seems to be designed for reading aloud (as hopefully you may do if in a group).

Some people in those early churches seem to have been saying that this physical world we live in is evil and that God can only be found by escaping to a different, spiritual world. For them, God becoming closely involved in this corrupt world seemed impossible; so Jesus could not have been God incarnate. 1 John rejects this view: the very first verse declares that God really did become human, incarnate in our messy world, as someone who could be seen and heard and touched. So this

world is not something to be rejected and escaped from; God delights in it and loves it enough to get deeply involved – and so should we!

1 John is written in deceptively simple words, full of deep truths and powerful challenges. Some of this involves picture language: for example, ‘God is light’ (1 John 1:5): not a literal description saying God is made up of photons, but a picture to intrigue us – we think about how light enables and sustains life, reveals what is hidden, opens up possibilities for ways forward. Another metaphor depicts everyday living as ‘walking around’. In biblical thinking, to live means to walk; if you are truly alive, then one of the signs of it is that you are on the move, travelling, not simply standing still.

Try some of these questions, to help you dig deeper into these verses.

- Which verse or phrase catches your attention? What do you think it is saying?
- What do these verses say about healthy relationships – with God and with each other?
- Why does sin need to be taken seriously, according to these verses? What are good and bad ways to deal with sin?
- How are we to understand that much used and abused word, ‘love’? What does agape, self-giving love, look like, according to these verses? (See also Jesus’ words in John 15:12-17)



INVOLVE: what does this passage say to you?

- Is sin a concern we focus on too much? Or too little? How does this affect you and others you know?
- As we take time to reflect on what we’ve received (life, forgiveness, fellowship, hope, food, clothing, love...), how does that affect our concerns about what we need? And does it transform our attitudes towards other people?
- What does self-giving love look like in your life and your relationships at present? Do particular people come to mind? (Do you have a favourite song or picture that expresses this kind of love?)
- How do you feel about enjoying and looking after the physical creation we live in – and also caring for your own embodied self? Does God choosing to enter our world in Jesus help you work that out?



NOURISH: something further to chew on...



Listen to the song 'Light of the World' by Lauren Daigle – online only or lyrics below.

Lyrics

The world waits for a miracle	He is the song for the suffering
The heart longs for a little bit of hope	He is Messiah, the Prince of Peace has come
Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel	He has come, Emmanuel
A child prays for peace on Earth	Glory to the light of the world
And she's calling out from a sea of hurt	Glory to the light of the world
Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel	Glory to the light of the world
And can you hear the angels singing	Glory to the light of the world
Glory to the light of the world	For all who wait
Glory, the light of the world is here	For all who hunger
The drought breaks with the tears of a mother	For all who've prayed
A baby's cry is the sound of love	For all who...
Come down, come down, Emmanuel	



Watch the video from Bishop Pete – either online or download.

Transcript...

I like to run once or twice a week and sometimes in the early morning. During last autumn, of course, as the nights grew longer and the days grew shorter, it became more and more difficult to run with confidence in the early morning so I bought this (*Bishop Pete shows a head torch*). I'm not going to put it on but you'll see it's really quite bright and there was a period of weeks in November and December when it made it possible for me still to be out running at about half past six/seven o'clock in the morning. It made it possible for me to run forwards with confidence in the semi dark and maybe that's an image for how it is for us to walk in the light of Christ – in that image is a sense that for those of us who are followers of Jesus, progress is necessary. We have to grow and move and develop and I hope that the shining as lights material this week has allowed you a chance to reflect on what that means for you.

How are you investing in your own growth as one of Christ's lights as you seek to walk in his light?

Of course, having a headlamp as you're running in the semi dark doesn't mean you won't fall over and once or twice I found myself tripping on a root branch that I hadn't seen clearly and you'll find it's the same as you seek to walk in the light of Christ. It doesn't mean that you'll never trip up, it doesn't mean you'll never go wrong. In fact, for those of us who want to progress most purposefully in following Jesus, that very sense of purpose and forward direction may mean that we do trip up, then there's nothing for it but to get up dust ourselves down and carry on again.



EXPERIMENT: how will you live this out?

Does something need adjusting to bring more balance in your daily life and walk with God? Here are some areas that might be relevant:

- Loving God and neighbour
- Living generously – time, money, skills
- Being content with enough
- Resisting the urge to blame or condemn other people
- Taking time regularly to enjoy hobbies/activities which refresh us: e.g. music, reading, playing games, gardening, creative projects, sport
- Regular physical exercise
- Quality time with family, with friends
- Living more sustainably

Many Christians are adjusting their lifestyle in order to care for creation better (eg finding locally grown food, eating less meat, using the bike or the bus, reusable bags rather than throwaway plastic, changing to renewable energy suppliers, changing business practices, lobbying local and national government...). For resources which can help you explore how to care for creation, you could try reading one of Ruth Valerio's books, particularly 'Saying Yes to Life'; we have this along with 'L' is for Lifestyle and Just Living available to borrow for free from our diocesan Resources Centre. Also look at the A Rocha website.

Do any of these suggestions prompt you to experiment with something a bit different in the next week or two? Rather than trying all of them, it will be more realistic to focus on just one or two.



If you are studying this course in a group. Pray together for each other, particularly for living out whatever you have decided to experiment with in the days ahead.

Next Session

Session 4: REFLECT the Light

"I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."